Iraq, cared deeply for the soldiers in his command, and always put a 110 percent effort into everything.

Captain Grassbaugh’s awards and decorations serve as testimony to his stellar character and performance. They include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korea Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Parachutist’s Badge, Combat Action Badge, and the Ranger Tab.

Patriots from the State of New Hampshire have served our Nation with honor and distinction from Bunker Hill to Zagaziyah, Iraq—and U.S. Army Ranger CPT Jonathan Grassbaugh served, led, and fought in that same fine tradition.

My sympathy, condolences, and prayers go out to Jon’s wife Jenna, his parents Mark and Patricia, brother Jason, and to his other family members and many friends who have suffered this most grievous loss. All will sorely miss Jon Grassbaugh, the caring husband, dedicated father, good friend, outstanding Ranger. Laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, Captain Grassbaugh joins his fellow heroes in eternal peace at our military’s most sacred place. In the words of another soldier who knew him, Daniel Webster may his memory live as long lasting as the land he honored. God bless Jonathan David Grassbaugh.

ADDRESSING THE DROPOUT EPIDEMIC

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, education has long been the key to opportunity, progress, and prosperity in America. Our schools and teachers prepare young Americans to compete and succeed in an ever-changing economy. Good schools shape the character of our citizens. They train Americans to participate in our democracy, and to serve our country and our communities. And a strong education system helps protect our national security. Above all, it’s a force to move America forward. It is the engine of the American dream.

When we enacted the No Child Left Behind Act, we sought to modernize and reform our public schools, and reaffirm the original commitment made in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. The No Child Left Behind Act sets lofty goals for all schools to meet, and requires States to establish high standards, and graduate on time. Congress should not abandon those fundamental goals as it works to reauthorize the law this year.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that too many of America’s students still don’t receive all that is needed to engage and succeed in school, learn to
completing high school as early as sixth grade. With early intervention, quality teachers, small classes, and data-driven instruction, we can ensure that these students make progress, stay in school and succeed.

One hidden reason high school, we must do more to engage them in the learning process. States and cities across the country are already taking steps to address this challenge, such as offering extra help during the school day, extending learning time, and adopting other school-based interventions.

In Massachusetts, Boston public schools are working with private partners to create smaller learning communities, improve instruction, and strengthen professional development for teachers. Our high schools are undergoing a transformation to focus on business, technology, health professions, arts, public service, engineering, sciences, international studies, and social work. Most of them, students can prepare for future opportunities after they graduate, by enrolling in courses for college credit or pursuing hands-on experience in a career that interests them.

We must all work in Congress to help more districts like Boston mount significant efforts to address these issues and make progress in reducing the dropout rate.

I have joined my colleagues on the HELP Committee—Senator BINGAMAN and Senator BURR—in introducing the Graduation Promise Act, which would fund state efforts that target resources and reforms to turn around high schools with low graduation rates. 15 percent of America’s high schools produce half of our dropouts. In these schools—some of which have as many as 400 students in a freshman class—8 out of 10 of the students start high school already having repeated a grade, or are special education students, or are two years or more below grade level.

It’s very clear that these schools need more assistance in supporting and retaining these students, and that’s what we hope to provide.

We must also do more to better connect schools with the communities around them, and provide the safety-net of services that at-risk students need to help them stay in school. The Keeping PACE Act would provide federal resources and support for secondary schools to improve academic achievement and ensure that every student has a fair opportunity to graduate. We need to target our efforts, resources, and ideas for effective reform to the schools that need them most.

As we consider ways to strengthen and advance our national commitment to leave no child behind, we have an opportunity to give teachers, schools, districts and states the support they need to ensure a high-quality education for every student.

We can no longer turn a blind eye to the millions of young people who fall through the cracks. Let us demand more of ourselves. Let us recommit ourselves to the spirit and the principles of excellence and equal opportunity that have shaped our historic commitment to improving public education. Above all, let us commit ourselves to the great goal of making this silent but severe epidemic—America’s dropout crisis—a thing of the past.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize Kate Martin, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several months.

Kate is a graduate of Ellendale High School in Ellendale, ND. Currently she is attending the University of North Dakota, where she is majoring in marketing and is pursuing a minor in international business. She is also active in her sorority Kappa Alpha Theta. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Kate for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.